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PRESENTATION
OF THE
ROYAL AWARDS,
FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF GEOGRAPHICAL SCIENCE AND
DISCOVERY, TO COL. J. C. FRÉMONT AND TO THE
REV. D. LIVINGSTON.

THE Annual Report of the Council having been read by the Secretary, the President addressed the meeting as follows :—

“ GENTLEMEN,—After the Report which you have just heard, it remains for me to carry into effect the decision of your Council, as therein expressed ; and it becomes a pleasing duty to deliver, from this Chair, the Honorary Gold Medal awarded by that decision, in pursuance of the principle of recognising and encouraging geographical undertakings of great interest and obvious practical utility. The services of Colonel Frémont are well known to most of the present meeting, having been brought before your notice last year by my predecessor. It therefore behoves me merely to make a brief mention of my own impressions as to the merits upon which this gentleman is the object of your attention, and who this day constitutes another link in the vast chain of connection which unites the esteem and labour of England with those of the United States of America—two countries of paramount importance in the maintenance of every generous and ennobling principle that can assist or adorn humanity.

“ I had for some years back heard of the active energies of Colonel Frémont, from several sources ; but when, in 1845, my friend Captain John Henry Aulick, of the U.S. Navy, kindly forwarded me a copy of the Report of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in 1842, and to Oregon and North California in 1843 and 1844, I confess that I was equally surprised and pleased. Having myself worked in the Surveying Department, I am well aware of the manifold difficulties of conveying choice instruments, and making delicate observations, under far less opposing circumstances than those experienced by Colonel Frémont ; and it is therefore that surprise increased my satisfaction. The singular mountain, the beautiful plain, the vast inland sea, and other geographical discoveries, might naturally be looked for in the first examination of so extensive a region of the world ; and a mere *reconnaissance* of the country travelled through would have been, perhaps, all that could be expected from even zealous and accomplished pioneers. But assuredly my admiration was excited when—in addition to topographical, geological, and botanical information—I found a series of astronomical operations seldom equalled

by explorers of unknown inland tracts. In closely examining the recorded observations, as well those for fixing latitudes as the altitudes of celestial bodies for rating the chronometers, and the meteorological tables by which the refraction of those bodies is corrected and the elevation of the land approximated, our applause is claimed as well for the head which plans as the hand which executes and faithfully registers the results. And we have before us unequivocal evidence that such is Colonel Frémont, and that in him, are combined qualities rendering him of all others the very individual fitted for the duties assigned to him, in each of which he has evidently acquitted himself with spirit, intelligence, perseverance, and methodical accuracy.

“ It has always been a principle understood and practised by your Council, and I think properly, that work of whatever excellence or utility, where it is only the result of the official employment of its author, is not to be placed in competition with the labours and investigations of spontaneous individual exertion ; our medal not being intended to note our approbation of the ability or merits of men appointed to public stations, from their being already known to be adapted to carry out public objects. Now in the award before us, this rule of judgment has been strictly adhered to ; for though two of the exploring expeditions in which Colonel Frémont distinguished himself so highly in the Far West, were undertaken by order of his Government, the third, that memorable one in which he and his intrepid companions encountered as many hardships and dangers as can possibly distress an enterprise, was entirely a private undertaking.

“ After the Colonel left the corps of Topographical Engineers, upon which he has reflected honour, he emigrated to California as a citizen-settler ; but the ‘ruling passion’ still maintained its full influence over him, for, with anything but a Californian impulse, he carried with him a well-selected stock of astronomical and surveying instruments, with the view of indulging in his scientific pursuits at such intervals as his other engagements would allow. Among other objects, he was desirous of establishing a large garden and botanical institution near San Francisco. Such a person was, however, too useful and highly regarded to be left to follow only the bent of his inclinations there, insomuch that, in the last year, he was elected a Senator in Congress for the new State of California, and is now, I believe, at Washington holding that important station.

“ This, then, is the man on whom you have this day bestowed the highest distinction which it is in your power to confer ; and I cannot but conscientiously congratulate you on the propriety and justice of your award. By the masterly treatment of all branches of his explorations, he has left his sign-manual, as it were, upon the surface of the earth, and his name is henceforth inseparably connected with the geographical history of the world. He is now embarked in a wide and weighty career ; and, as the Hon. John Charles Frémont is said to be the youngest man in the Congress, it is to be devoutly hoped that he will long enjoy the fruits of his well-earned reputation.”

The President, then addressing the American Minister, said,—

“MR. LAWRENCE,—We are delighted that you have this day honoured our Anniversary Meeting, on the occasion of thus rendering a sincere tribute of our regard for the geographical labours of your distinguished countryman. And in using the word ‘honoured,’ I do it under conviction; for although we should be proud of receiving any Ambassador on such an occasion, it becomes me to remark how highly that honour is enhanced by its being so earnest a promoter of knowledge, as the Hon. Abbott Lawrence, who now appears among us. Your munificent exertions, Sir, in the cause of sound education are well known to us; and we hope that this medal will be the more valuable to Colonel Frémont from passing through the hands of so estimable a patron of science as your Excellency.”

Mr. Lawrence, on receiving the medal, replied,—

“MR. PRESIDENT,—It is with great pride and satisfaction that I am here to receive at your hands the medal awarded by the Council of the Royal Geographical Society to Colonel Frémont. In his behalf I thank you, and the gentlemen of the Council and the Society, for an honour which I am sure he will appreciate as one of the most distinguished that has been conferred upon him in his brilliant career.

“This testimonial could not have been given to a more deserving individual. Colonel Frémont possesses in an eminent degree the elements of a just success. He has ability, perseverance, cultivation, and industry; and, above all, he is endowed with high moral attributes, which have won for him the esteem of those more immediately connected with him, and the confidence of his fellow-citizens in the country at large, who will see with pleasure this day’s evidence of your correct appreciation of his services to science.

“But I look upon this award of your Council as something more than a tribute to individual worth. I esteem it a national honour; and, as the representative of the United States, I offer you their and my grateful thanks. It is not the least of the charms of science that it is not bounded by the limits of nations. Its influence is as wide as the world; and new discoveries, whether in the field of geographical or other science, are the common property of mankind. Scientific men form a common brotherhood throughout all nations; and the harmony of feeling between them has done much, and is destined to do yet more, towards establishing and maintaining the peace of the world.

“The New has incurred a great debt to the Old World, and particularly to Great Britain, for scientific knowledge. This they hope to repay in some measure at no very distant day. We have made rapid strides in the Union within a few years, and confidently hope soon to contribute our quota to the common stock. Our desire, Mr. President and Gentlemen, is perseveringly to maintain with you a friendly competition, having for its object the advancement of civilization and the elevation of the condition of man throughout the world. And we fervently hope that nothing will occur to prevent this, either by the disturbance of the peace now happily existing between the nations of

Europe, or the cessation of the very friendly feeling between this country and the United States of America."

The President then proceeding, observed—

"GENTLEMEN,—It is now my duty to inform you, that the Council have not considered themselves called upon this year to adjudicate a second gold medal. And here perhaps I may be allowed, on the first occasion of thus addressing you, to express my own opinion, that if you wish to uphold its value as a reward for extraordinary exertions, or for information of the highest value to the objects of this Society, the Council cannot be too cautious in awarding this, the greatest mark of approbation which it is in their power to bestow.

"It has been the practice of my predecessors on various similar occasions, in their annual addresses, to make honourable mention of the names of those individuals who have signalised themselves in the cause of Geographical research and discovery; and I cannot doubt but that such a compliment has had its proper effect, in satisfying many that their exertions have been duly appreciated where they are best understood; and in stimulating others to make new efforts to add to our store of knowledge, and to their own honour. But we are this year called upon especially to mark our sense of the importance of a journey made by the Rev. David Livingston, and his companions, Messrs. Oswell and Murray, in the interior of South Africa, with the object of reaching the large lake of Ngami; a lake long known to exist, but the true position of which had not yet been accurately determined,—no European traveller having previously reached its shores.

"The earliest Portuguese settlers in South Africa had received accounts of its existence from the natives, and did not hesitate to place it on their first maps of the country. You will find it laid down, and less inaccurately than would be expected, in one bearing date so far back as the year 1508, which is in the collection of the Society. From this curious document, the Lake probably found its way into most of the old maps, till, I suppose from the absence of any new information to corroborate its reality, it was omitted altogether by D'Anville, and those who followed him. Such was the condition of the case until a few years ago, when it was again agitated; and a paper was laid before this Society by Mr. James Macqueen, founded on information regarding it, which, with his customary zeal, he had collected from various sources; and especially from the very individual who has since reached its shores. On these grounds, therefore, without violence of expression, I may say that our explorers have really discovered it, and fixed an important geographical fact. Moreover, it will be in your recollection, that a specimen of the cloth made by the natives of that district, dyed with the wild indigo of the country, together with the enormous tusks of the African wild boar, the flat head of a fish abounding in the Lake, and the fly so dangerous to the cattle and horses of the traveller, were exhibited at one of your evening Meetings; and it has been pronounced that the fish and the fly are unquestionably new.

"Mr. Livingston, it appears, had long had this discovery at heart, when he was, with great liberality, last year provided with the means

necessary to carry out his objects by Messrs. Oswell and Murray, who accompanied him on his journey; and to whose energy and assistance, he acknowledges himself to have been mainly indebted for the successful issue of his undertaking.

“The accounts which have been read to the Society, of Mr. Livingston’s journey, comprise not only a positive addition to our acquaintance with South Africa; but, from the statement of this great Lake’s being the receptacle of the waters of some large river or rivers running into it from the north, with which we are totally unacquainted, and which are carried off again in an easterly direction by the channel of the Zouga (another river almost equally unknown to us), a prospect of new fields for research and discovery is opened along the courses of those rivers. Indeed the important results of exploring such streams it is impossible to predict; and two travellers connected with this Society, Messrs. Galton and Andeson, have already started in that direction.

“The zealous pastor is in correspondence with the London Missionary Society; to whose kindness—as well as to that of Captain Thomas Steele, one of our own Members—we are indebted for the communication of the first accounts received by them of his expedition. On examining these documents, your Council, in the hope that it may be acceptable, has resolved to address a special letter to Mr. Livingston, expressing their sense of the service he has rendered to Geographical Science, and accompanying it with the remainder of the Royal Premium, which is at their disposal for the present year.

“They trust that the honour of this award out of a royal grant may be some encouragement to him, and to other gentlemen similarly situated, to transmit to the Society any geographical information which they may collect, and which they must have so many opportunities of acquiring in the prosecution of their Missionary labours in the remote and unknown regions which it is their object to explore.

“I propose to address him in the following terms:—

“*Royal Geographical Society, May 27, 1850.*

“REVEREND SIR,—By desire of the Council of the Royal Geographical Society of London, it is my pleasing duty to acquaint you that your letters to the London Missionary Society, and to Captain Steele, of the Coldstream Guards, containing an account of your having reached, with Messrs. Oswell and Murray, your fellow travellers, the great Lake of Ngāmi, in latitude 20° 20' south, have been publicly read at one of the evening Meetings of the Society, and will be printed in the forthcoming number of its Journal, together with some further interesting details of the expedition subsequently furnished by a letter from Mr. Oswell, which has also been communicated to this Society.

“The Council have been greatly interested in these accounts, which they cannot but regard as a most valuable addition to our knowledge of the Geography of South Africa; whilst the fact stated of this extensive inland water being but the out-pouring of some large river or rivers from the north, seems to point the way to a vast and entirely fresh region, the exploration of which may lead to weighty consequences. But whatever those results may be, you, Sir, and your enterprising companions, have undoubtedly secured the credit of being the first Europeans who have reached the great Lake of Ngāmi, and to whom we are indebted for the only positive account of it that yet exists.

“ We being therefore desirous, not only to bear our written testimony to the service you have rendered to science, but to mark in a special manner our sense of its importance, have determined to award to you one half of the sum placed this year at our disposal by Her Most Gracious Majesty, as a ‘ Royal Premium for the Encouragement of Geographical Science and Discovery :’ and we have, in consequence, directed the sum of 25 guineas to be placed at your disposal in any way you may direct.

“ The Council trust, that while prosecuting your labours in a higher vocation, you will still persevere in your onward scientific course: and heartily wishing you success, I have only further to add, that the Members of this Society will at all times be happy to receive accounts of your future travels, and of the new regions which you will probably be one of the foremost in exploring.

“ I have the honour to remain, Rev. Sir,
“ Your obedient Servant,
“ W. H. SMYTH, *President.*”

The President, then addressing the Rev. Dr. Tidman, Secretary to the London Missionary Society, and Alderman Challis, as representatives of Mr. Livingston, said—

“ GENTLEMEN,—Having thus stated the reasons which have guided the Council in their decision upon this occasion, it becomes my grateful office to request you, Mr. Alderman Challis and Dr. Tidman, to convey this testimony of the approval of the Royal Geographical Society to the Rev. David Livingston, with our warmest wishes for the continuance of his health and strength to follow out the discoveries he has thus successfully opened up.

“ Geographical discovery in Africa has long commanded, and will ever command, a greater degree of interest than in, perhaps, any other portion of the globe; and with reason: for while it was one of the earliest inhabited portions of the world, and some of its people shone before all other nations in the scientific and industrial arts, it is now the least known and the least civilized of any. Indeed, the intelligent races of Europe have less knowledge of it in the present day than they had two thousand years ago; and ignorance, with debasing and repulsive barbarism, reign almost supreme from one end of that vast peninsula to the other.

“ Yet nowhere else has so much been done, or rather attempted, by travellers; a faithful, a zealous, and a sacred band has, for the last hundred years, been proceeding towards that forlorn hope of geography. Though frustrated and baffled, if not actually defeated and destroyed, they steadily kept the prize in view. All the properties and means of men and nature seemed leagued against those adventurous spirits: either a climate peculiarly pestiferous carried them off at once by disease, or arid wastes, of an intensity and extent unknown elsewhere, presented insurmountable obstacles to journeying through or sojourning in the land; while a warlike, and generally an implacable population, from the Arabs in the North to the Caffirs and Bushmans in the South, terminated the career of many whom the elements and sterility of the country had spared. Add to this the very small number of Europeans on any part of that continent, the enormous spaces to be tra-

versed, and the much greater distances from supplies and resources than in any other land, and some idea will be had of the peculiar difficulties besetting the African traveller; and the too powerful reasons which have acted in keeping up, even to the present time, so vast a *terra incognita* as the interior of the ancient land of Ham and of Cush still presents to our view.

“Assure Mr. Livingston, therefore, that we think his researches the more creditable to him, on considering his success where so much is imperatively required to be done: where so many have failed, and so many have fallen.

“And, Gentlemen, I cannot but consider it peculiarly fortunate that you have been commissioned to receive this award, inasmuch as I could not with any justice forbear on such an occasion to allude honourably to the particular Society to which the Rev. Mr. Livingston belongs: for the present signal result is but one of the steps of the beneficent scheme which is carrying out in South Africa, in a spirit of perfect unity, by Missionaries of every European nation.

“It will be needless for me to refer here to the innumerable instances of ‘Black Coats,’ to use a local but expressive phrase, becoming the pioneers of geographical discovery; of their preceding both the travellers and the traders from the Cape; and of their afterwards smoothing the way for them, civilizing and humanizing, if not always Christianizing, the wild and lawless tribes. But some reference may, with propriety, be made to the great attempt under Dr. Andrew Smith, in 1834. This expedition, the largest and best appointed that ever left Cape Town, had in view the discovery of the long talked of, but still almost fabulous lake in the interior. Having penetrated to Kuruman, the station of the Rev. Mr. Moffatt, he accompanied and carried it through the Zoola country, as far as 23° S. latitude; but that proved to be the utmost distance they could reach, and they were compelled to return.

“The failure of this grand enterprise, as far as the lake was concerned, seemed to dishearten further pursuit; the colonists never ventured again, so that traders and hunters alone have since been wandering on the tracks of the party. The only scientific traveller, Captain Sir James E. Alexander, subsequently sent out from England by this society, in despair of the lake and of discovery by the oft-tried eastern route, explored the neighbourhood of the western coast instead.

“The missionary system, however, was at work the while, noiselessly and securely. The Rev. Robert Moffatt, without the mention of whose name any notice of South African exploration must be incomplete, was still at his post; and he was still blessed with his wonted success in pacifying the hostile, and reforming the ways of the treacherous and rapacious tribes of the interior. Thus acting, he left behind him a quiet and inoffensive people, and pushed northwards to new dangers and persecutions, but finally to triumphs. Joined by other spirits as zealous as himself, the work advanced rapidly, until last year, in the ripeness of time, one of the great cynosures of South African discovery fell an easy capture. The missionaries, following up their own high calling, had so facilitated the traveller’s task, that the hour at last

came when the mere subsidy of a moderate amount of money for a small onward movement procured as its result one of those great lakes which had baffled the larger and smaller expeditions of so-called discovery, had eluded the most scientific travellers, and had escaped the grasp of the most adventurous hunters and traders.

“ In conclusion, Gentlemen, I cannot but wish success, both spiritual and temporal, to your Society; and long may you possess such members as Messrs. Moffatt and Livingston.”

Mr. Alderman Challis replied—

“ Mr. PRESIDENT,—I beg, in the name of the Directors of the London Missionary Society, to return you and the Council of the Royal Geographical Society our sincere thanks for the distinguished mark of your approbation to our excellent missionary, the Rev. David Livingston, for his interesting discoveries in South Africa.

“ Allow me, Sir, also to assure you that it will afford the Directors, in common with the managers of all other missionary institutions, peculiar satisfaction that their agents should in all cases employ both their influence and their exertions to promote the interests of science, and the social no less than the religious improvement of the people among whom they carry on their benevolent labours.”

And the Rev. Dr. Tidman, Secretary to the London Missionary Society, observed,—

“ Mr. PRESIDENT,—Allow me to add a few sentences in reference to the character and qualifications of my excellent friend, the Rev. David Livingston, to whom you have awarded so honourable a testimonial of your respect and approbation. Mr. Livingston possesses many of the most important qualifications for exploring the hitherto terra incognita of South Africa. He is intimately acquainted with the Sechuana language, which appears to be understood by several other tribes and nations to the northward. He is a man of great self-denial and of singular intrepidity, combined with sound discretion. His benevolent character and blameless life make him regarded by the natives as their friend and benefactor; and as a Christian missionary, sustaining this honourable consistency, he travels without fear where the face of a white man has not been seen. I am sure he will feel greatly encouraged by the approval on the part of the Royal Geographical Society of his recent successful enterprise in company with Messrs. Murray and Oswell; and, impelled by a love of geographical science, and the yet higher motives of Christian benevolence, I venture to predict that he will hereafter accomplish yet more important objects in exploring the unknown regions of that vast continent.”

After the other proceedings had been completed, and the Officers and Council had been elected, the President proceeded to address the Meeting.